

## Contribution of Private Sector Participation In The Provision of Secondary Education in Ebonyi State

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### Abstract

The study examined the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State. The study employed document analysis design and the population was all the 382 senior secondary schools in the state. This number comprised of 220 public secondary schools and 162 private secondary schools in the state. All the schools were sampled using the census technique. The study used secondary data collected from Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board (SEB) and Ebonyi State Ministry of Education. Percentage and charts were used in analyzing the data. The results showed that private sector in recent years have contributed immensely in the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State. This was indicated by the number of schools built by the private sector, which rose from 19 schools in 2012/2013 session to 162 schools in 2018/2019. These figures represent an increase from 23.8% in 2012/2013 to 42.4% in 2018/2019. In the same vein, during these years, enrolments in private schools skyrocketed from 3,697 students representing 23.3% to 23,921 students representing 33% of the total enrolments. In conclusion, it was noticed that the private sector is not just contributing significantly to the provision of secondary education but is speedily taking over the provision of secondary education. A trend if left unchecked and uncontrolled may likely send our public secondary schools into extinction. The work therefore recommended that government should put policies in place that should revive our public schools to avoid its going into extinction, thereby abandoning the education of its citizen into the hands of private sectors whose primary interest is profit maximization to the detriment of developmental goals and aspirations of the country. It also recommended that private sector should be considerate with their charges even as they assist to provide secondary education to our teeming population.

**Keywords:** Enrolment, Private sector, Secondary education, Public schools, Private schools.

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### INTRODUCTION

Private sector contribution to education has recently undergone remarkable growth. This contribution comes in different forms, such as schools financed and managed by the private sector, schools financed by the government and managed by the private sector and tutoring outside the classroom. In its broadest sense, the private sector refers to non-state entities that contributes in providing

educational services at all levels of education, which includes communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, trade unions, private companies, small-scale informal and individuals (Lewis & Patrinos, 2011 in Dahal & Nguyen, 2014). Researchers have found that private sector in recent years has contributed immensely to the provision of not just secondary education, but also in primary and higher education, (Ankeli, 2019; Ben-Shahar, n.d; Dahal & Nguyen, 2014; Khan & Ayub, 2019; Moschetti et al., 2019; Rivera, 2018; & Verger et al., 2017).

This seems undebatable due to the feasible upsurge of private schools on daily basis, but of special concern to the researcher is to quantitatively ascertain the extent the private sector has contributed in the provision of education in terms of building more schools and improving access to secondary schools. This becomes very necessary because it is true that private sector has the potential to be part of the solution to many education problems there is still need to monitor closely this trend in order to checkmate some excesses of the private sector whose sole interest is profit maximization in detriment to developmental aspirations and unity of the country. It is against this background that this work seeks to analysis the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State by considering enrolments in all private secondary schools in the state and comparing them with enrolments in public secondary schools in the state.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Education is a road map to the development of any nation. Secondary education is the bridge between the primary and tertiary education. It is the stage that prepares one for useful living in the society and for higher education. This level of education is supposed to be handled with care to achieve the needed results. Globally, in the past 30 years due to the wave of privatization in almost all the sectors of the economy, some researchers had reported a robust participation of private sector in the provision of secondary education, (Ankeli, 2019; Ben-Shahar n.d; Bold et al., 2014; Khan & Ayub, 2019). Kishore, Sigh a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, had also alarmed that soon it may not be an exaggeration to say that privatization is supplanting public education instead of supplementing it (Kishore, 2014). There is therefore the need to monitor closely this trend in order to checkmate some excesses of the private sector whose sole interest is to maximize profit in detriment of developmental goals of the country or state. This study therefore, seeks to find out the extent private sector participation has contributed to the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is of special interest because of its educational backwardness which has earned it the only educationally disadvantaged State in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study is to find out the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State. Stated specifically, the study seeks to find out;

1. the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in terms of building more senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
2. the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in terms of providing admission places (enrolments) in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What is the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in terms of building more schools in Ebonyi State?
2. What is the contribution of private sector participation in provision of secondary education in terms of providing admission places (enrolments) in Ebonyi State?

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **The Sectors of Nigerian Economy**

The sectors of Nigerian economy are basically divided into three types, namely the Primary sector, the secondary and the tertiary sector. The primary sector deals with all the natural endowments of the country and it comprises of agriculture, oil/gas, mining and forestry. The Secondary sector has to do what all manner of tangible production and example are light and all kinds of industries. Tertiary sector which is also called the service sector has to do with all manner of services which includes transportation, commerce, hospitality, health, education, security and so on. The economy can also be divided into the public and private sectors. The most significant difference between the private and public sectors is the ownership of the organizations within them. In the public sector, organizations are owned and controlled by the government; meanwhile, organizations within the private sector are owned and managed by individuals or private companies.

The public sector which is being represented by the government according to 1999 constitution has some responsibilities and duties it should perform for the people. Among them are; maintenance of law and order, protection of lives and properties, provision of welfare services which includes health, roads, good pipe borne water, electricity, education and any services which improves the peoples standard of living, provision of economic development and protection of human rights.

The discourse above shows that education falls within the service sector of the economy and it is also the responsibility of government to provide for it. This was further buttressed and clearly stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, p.70)

Education is a capital-intensive social services which requires  
adequate Financial provisions from all tiers of government  
Government's ultimate goal is to make education free at all levels  
in addition to assistance from International and Local development  
Partners, grants for research and other donor agencies communities

With this policy statement clearly stated it becomes mandatory for government to take the responsibility of the education of its citizen with assistance from the international communities and the private sector. Contrary to this policy statement many researchers has found an active and robust contribution coming from the private sector indicating that government is gradually withdrawing from its responsibility of providing education to its citizen and so largely abdicating this to the private sector. (Arinze, 2016; Danjuma et al., 2018; Eze, 2017; Ige, 2012; Nwakpa 2016).

### **Responsibility for the Management and Funding of Secondary Education in Nigeria**

The Federal government through the National Council on Education (NCE 1993), made up of all ministers and commissioners of educations of the thirty-six states and Federal Capital Territory co-ordinates the affairs of education in the country. They consider things that would promote the growth and development of education. At the national level the co-ordination of secondary education is the responsibility of the Department of Basic and Secondary Education, under the ministry of education, while in most states the State Education Management Boards (SEMB), under the state ministry of education manages its state-owned public schools and the private sector finance and manages private schools.

Based on funding and management, Secondary education in Nigeria are categorized into three groups; naming federal government colleges, public secondary schools and private secondary schools. Federal Government Colleges or Unity Schools are funded and managed by federal

governments directly. The 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) is supposed to have two unity schools each. These schools are expected to be models for other secondary schools. State Owned Public Secondary Schools are owned and funded by the state governments. In some states, secondary education is free while in others students pay fees. Privately owned Secondary Schools as the name implies are funded and managed by individuals, religious organizations or institutions. The private owners charges fees for their services. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

It is also needful for the purpose of clarification to highlight that in Nigeria secondary education is divided into two stages, the junior and senior secondary schools. At Junior Secondary School (JSS), students spend three years and at the end take Junior School Examination (JSSC), which qualifies them for Senior Secondary School (SSS). At the end of 3 years in senior secondary, they write both or either the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). The two examinations are equivalent to the former West African School Certificate (WASC). Success at these examinations qualifies a student for higher or tertiary education, which is education gotten in the universities, polytechnics, monotechnic, and colleges of education, etc. In this study secondary education refers to education received both at the Junior and Senior Secondary Schools.

### **Private Sector Contribution in the Provision of Secondary Education**

Apart from establishment and management of private schools which is the main focus of this work, private sector has also been contributing immensely to the provision of education in the country. Its contribution is multidimensional which ranges from community efforts, other assistance and contributions of individuals and organization to total funding and management of their own schools. Some of these are discussed below;

- i. Community Efforts:** Even before 21<sup>st</sup> century communities have been contributing significantly to the development of education in their areas. Such efforts could be in the form of constructing school buildings for primary or secondary, people being encouraged to bring building materials, cash, plots of land and even physical labour. In some communities, levies were imposed on households by the community leader in other to carry out one educational project or another. Sometimes communities pay their wards fees jointly by doing a manual work together and using the proceed to pay the fees. Nwadiani (2000), Odo (2008) in Nwadike, (2012) and Agabi, (2019) all agreed that communities have being playing key role in the funding of secondary education in Nigeria in the form of laboratory equipment, construction of classrooms and offices, text books, exercise books, instructional materials; etc. Sometime also, some publishing houses like Longman, Heinemann, Spectrum, Delta Publishing company donate books, stationeries used by students to the schools.
- ii. Alumni Associations:** This is one the charitable organizations that have been of great help in providing fund for their alma-mater. Most often former students levy themselves or organize a dinner night where they can raise reasonable fund for their former schools. It has been shown that alumni associations is a force to reckon with when it comes to financing of secondary education. The memories of one's secondary days usually leaves lasting emotions and so create a strong attachment to the school and your colleagues. Members usually look forward to such gatherings, which is a good opportunity to raise fund. There are rumours that some schools Alumni are preparing seriously to take over

the management of their alma-mater in case government wants to sell, lease or go into private partnership.

- a. **Other Special School Activities:** Effective schools administrators have put on their thinking cap to source for other means of raising fund for their schools than holding hands and waiting for government to do everything for them. Such school activities aimed at raising funds are; appeals for citizens to donate money or equipment to the school; sales of agricultural products, like yam, cassava, maize; sales of handiworks like brooms, baskets, local fan; organizing fund-raising programmes, also called launching; collecting gate fees for dramas, plays, concerts, film-shows organized by the school; organizing cultural day and inviting parents, chiefs, politicians and other important personality to the occasion. These dignitaries usually make donations before leaving; appointing and organizing patron and patroness days. The patrons and patroness make contribution to the school on regular basis and naming the school houses after some important dignitaries. During interschool competitions these people assist in one way or other.
- iii. **Private Service Providers in State Schools:** Private sectors also provide some private services in public schools. Numerous private entities, for profit and not-for-profit, operate educational programs in state schools meant to enrich and supplement the basic education supplied by the state (Dagan-Buzaglo, 2010; Vorgan, 2011 in Ben-Shahar n.d). Most often the initiators of these programmes are usually the parents and the schools.
- iv. **Education Taxes:** Companies pay certain percentage of the taxes for the purpose of education. A common example is the Tertiary Education Trust Fund TETFund.

### **Privatization**

The past 30 years, in line with similar developments around the world, education system has undergone processes of privatization. Several related causes have been documented as responsible for triggering privatization. First, the rise of neoliberal ideology and approaches of new public management, that posits that the private sector has the tools to improve government activities and even education (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992 in Ben-Shahar, n.d).

Secondly, beginning in the 1980s dissatisfaction with the public education system led to a 'bottom up' form of privatization in which private entities including parents, organizations and commercial companies became increasingly involved in education. This intervention, which took different forms, including financial investment and involvement in educational content and practice, was not prevented by the government and was often encouraged (Svirski & Dagan-Buzaglo, 2009 in Ben-Shahar, n.d). Permissive rules for establishing non-state schools and the generous public funding they receive also encouraged opting out of the state education system altogether in favour of new non-state schools that would, supposedly, supply better education (Ichilov, 2010 in Ben-Shahar, n.d).

Finally, whereas education was traditionally viewed as having a social function in promoting solidarity and common values, a fragmented approach towards education emerged (Scott and DeMartino, 2009 in Ben-Shahar, n.d). This consisted of an individualist-consumerist ethos according to which education is a market-oriented private good that should be controlled by its consumers (students, families), rather than a public good with primarily social and political goals such as

promoting solidarity and social cohesion and educating citizens (Boyd, 2003; Ichilov, 2010 in Ben-Shahar, n.d).

However, defining privatization is not a simple task; there is no single, agreed meaning, and the usage varies according to context. Most broadly defined, privatization in education (and in other domains) is the transfer of various activities from the public to the private sector. This includes contracting out provision of different services and goods; deregulating entrance to the education markets that were monopolized by the state; charging payment for education services; initiating voucher schemes that allow choice between both public and private schools; transferring educational projects to private contractors; initiating partnerships between public and private entities; and more. There are other kinds of policies that do not involve transferring activities to the private sphere, and therefore do not constitute privatization in the strict sense, but since they support reforms of privatization and complement them, they can be viewed as part of the processes of privatization. Examples include decentralization of education control, school choice and competition between public schools, and the introduction of standards and accountability to educational governance.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theory that guided this work is the Classical theory of economics propounded by Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, David Ricardo, Thomas Robert Malthus, and John Stuart Mill in Jhingan (2012). This theory economics thought originated in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, especially in Britain. The classical theory focused on economic growth and economic freedom, advocating *laissez-faire* ideas and belief in free competition. They believe that each individual is led by an invisible hand which guides market mechanism and opposes any form of government intervention except to ensure free operation of markets and a balanced budget.

Deeply rooted in this theory is the concept of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is therefore contemporarily used to refer to market-oriented reform policies such as "eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers" and reducing, especially through privatization and austerity, state influence in the economy (Oana, 2015). The relevance of the theory to this study is the ideology which gave birth to most countries opening their doors to private individuals and organization taking over the activities and services hitherto carried out by the government, which also includes private sector participating in the provision of education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed document/content analysis design and all the 382 senior secondary schools in Ebonyi state constituted the population. This number comprises of 220 public and 162 private secondary schools in the state. All the schools were sampled using the census technique. The study used secondary data collected from Ebonyi State Secondary Education Board (SEB) and Ebonyi State Ministry of Education. Percentage and charts were used in analyzing the data.

## **Results**

The results of the findings to the research questions are addressed one after the other. The research questions were answered based on the ways private sector participation has contributed in the provision of senior secondary education in Ebonyi State as shown in tables 1 and 2; and figures 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Table 1: Private Sector Participation in terms of Building Senior Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State**

Academic Sessions	No of Schools Built by Private Sector	No of Schools Built by Government	Total No of Schools	Percentage that is Private Schools	Percentage that is Public Schools
2012/2013	19	61	80	23.8%	76.2%
2014/2015	37	204	241	15.4%	84.6%
2015/2016	133	216	349	38.1%	61.9%
2017/2018	154	212	366	42.1%	57.9%
2018/2019	162	220	382	42.4%	57.6%

Source: Ebonyi Ministry of Education

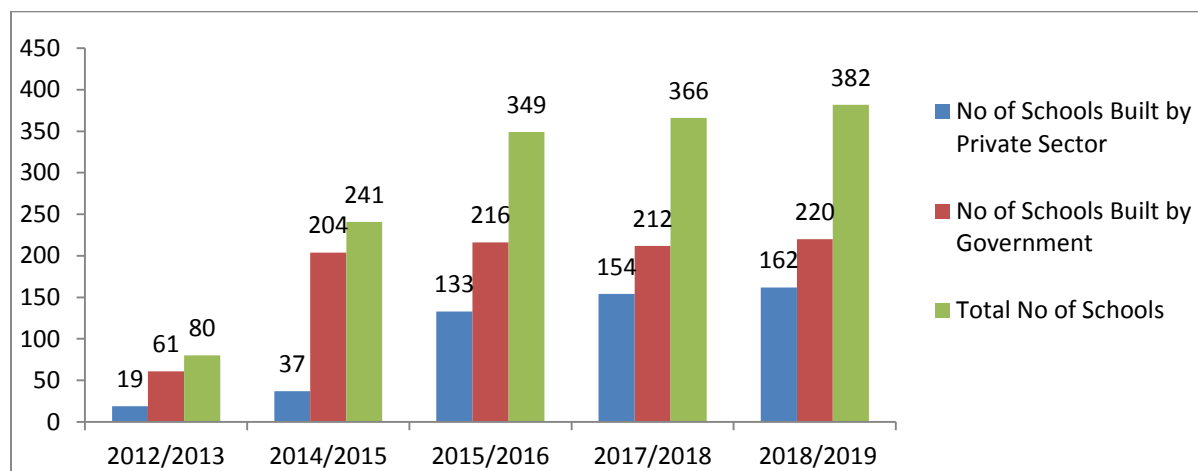


Figure 1: Histogram showing number of private senior secondary schools in comparison with public schools in Ebonyi State from 2012-2019

Source: from Table 1 above

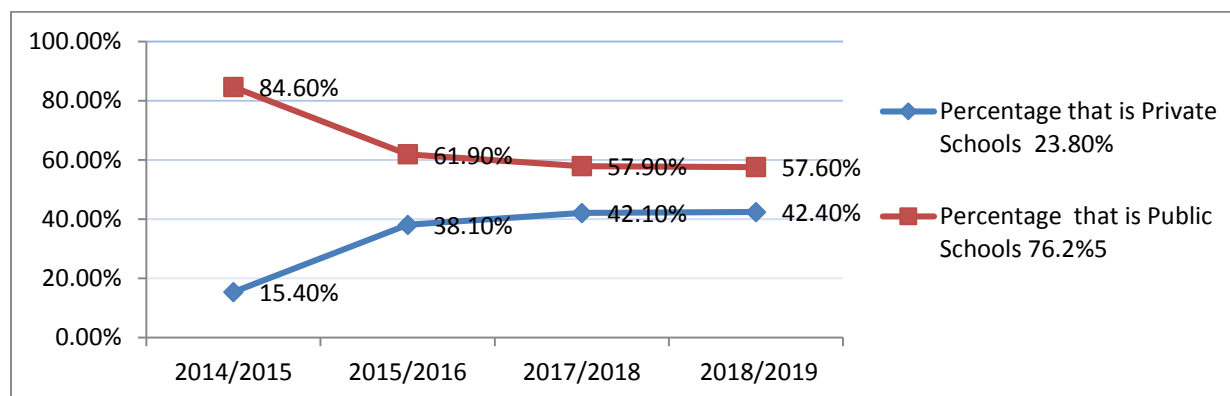


Figure 2: Line chart showing number of private schools in comparison with public schools in Ebonyi State from 2012-2019

Source: from Table 1

Table 1, figures 1 and 2 show the enrolment trend in both private and public senior secondary schools in Ebonyi state from 2012/2013 session to 2018/2019 session. It can be seen that private sector has contributed in building more senior secondary schools which has astronomically increased from 19 schools in 2012/2013 session to 162 schools in 2018/2019 session. Also, as can be seen from

the line chart percentage of private senior secondary schools has increased from 15.4% to 42.4% during the years under consideration. This is in contrast with public schools that though the number of schools has increased from 61 schools to 220, but in terms of percentage, there has been a decline from 84.6% to 57.9%.

This result which depicts official data, however it is also worthy to highlight that some private schools might not have been covered. The possibility of not reaching some mushroom ones under uncompleted buildings, makeshift structures and in individual flats should not be ruled out. The researcher feels if all these were added, the figures would have been more intimidating when compared with that of public schools.

However, the finding agrees with research findings of Ramulongo (2016); Dahal and Nguyen (2014); Njoku and Adeyemi (2013). In their different studies they found out private sector has been contributing significantly in providing more access to education to our teeming population. They also discovered that private sector has brought secondary schools to the door post of families unlike when students have to trek several Kilometers to go to secondary schools. Private sector by establishing private schools very close to homes have made it easier for students to just walk across from their homes to schools and because the schools are close to the homes, parents can also monitor the movement and performance of their wards.

**Table 2: Students' Enrolment in both Private and Public Senior Secondary in Ebonyi State**

Academic Sessions	No of Students' Enrolments in Private Sector	No of Students' Enrolments in Public Schools	Total No of Students' Enrolments in both Schools	Percentage Enrolment in Private Schools	Percentage Enrolment in Public Schools
2012/2013	3,697	12,172	15,869	23.3%	76.7%
2014/2015	8,602	57,474	66,076	13%	87%
2015/2016	25,315	50,797	76,112	33.3%	66.7%
2017/2018	22,863	48,708	71,571	32%	68%
018/2019	23,921	48,828	72,749	33%	67%

Source: Ebonyi State Ministry of Education

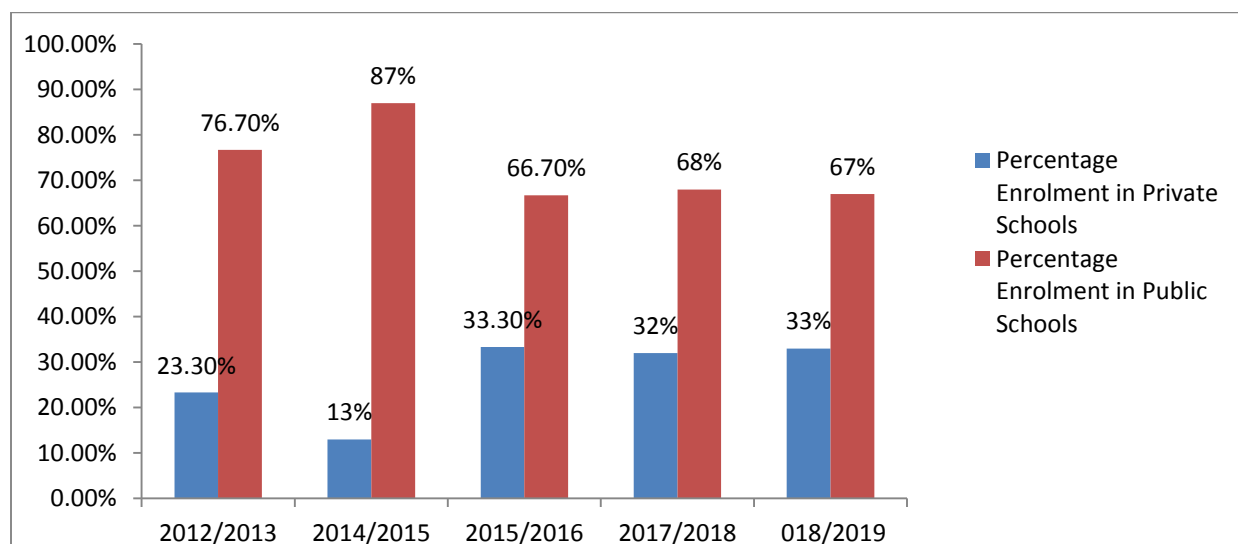


Figure 3: Histogram of percentage enrolment in both Private and Public schools in Ebonyi State from 2012-2019

Source: from Table 2

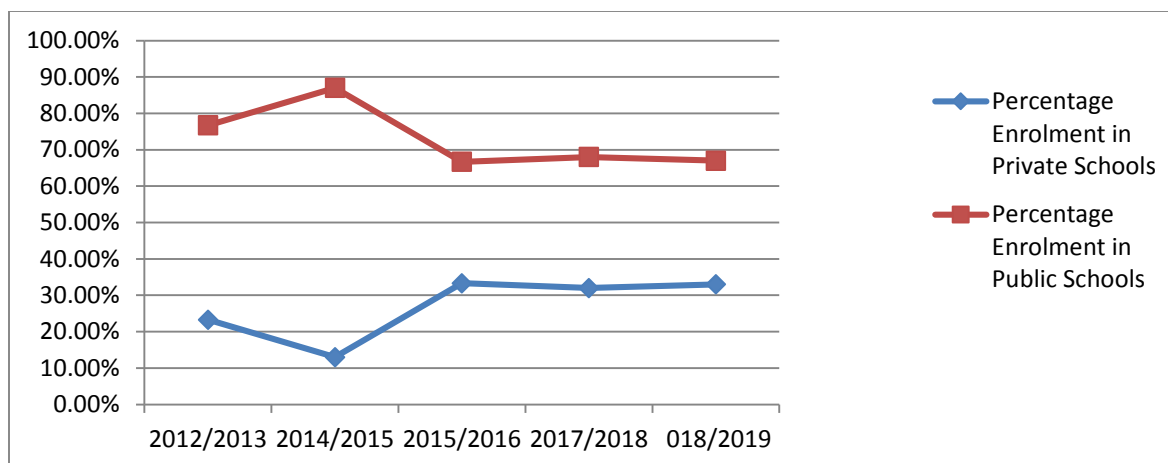


Figure 4: Line chart showing percentage enrolment in both private and public senior secondary in Ebonyi State from 2012-2019

Source: from Table 2

Table 2 and the figure 3 above also show that private sector has contributed in the provision of senior secondary education in Ebonyi to a greater extent by having increased students' enrolment from 3,697 in 2012/2013 representing 23.3% of the total enrolment to 23,921 representing 33% in 2018/2019 session. This represents both an increase in number of enrolment and percentage enrolment of total enrolments in the state within the session under consideration. Comparatively public senior secondary schools within this period have also witnessed an increased enrolment from 15,869 to 72,749, but a decrease in percentage enrolment, as can be seen from its line chart which is sloping downward. Their percentage enrolment declined from 76.7% in 2012/2013 session to 67% in 2018/2019 session.

The results confirm the findings of researchers like Ankeli (2019), Arinze (2016), Ben-Shahar (n.d), Danjuma et al. (2018), Eze (2017), Ige (2012), Kha and Ayub (2019), Nwakpa (2016) and Twebaze (2015). In their various studies, they found out that private sector is making a tremendous contribution in the provision of education and that the provision of education is fast moving from being the responsibility of government to that of the private sector. In support of this, most relevant international data sources indicated that both private financing in education and enrolment in primary and secondary private schools have been constantly increasing all over the world since the 90s. In a recent household survey data, Dahal and Nguyen (2014) reported that almost one-third of school children aged 6 to 18 years in South Asia go to private schools. In the same vein, Twebaze (2015) had reported that about 33% of total enrolment of students in Uganda are in private schools and similar rapid increases are also taking place in many countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana (Global Campaign for Education, 2016).

Kishore, a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, vividly described the situation when he reported that soon, it may not be an exaggeration to say that private schools is supplanting public education instead of supplementing (Kishore, 2014); Which was not the original intention of government by involving private sector to participate in the provision of education. The intention was just for the private sector to supplement the effort of the government, but it seems the government is gradually withdrawing from the education of its citizen and indirectly handing them over to the profit seeking private sector which researchers like Ubogu and Veronica (2018) and Nath (2018) have indicated has far reaching negative consequences of making education just for the rich and affluence and excluding the poor and down trodden.

However, the participation of private sector in the provision of secondary education has been of help in so many ways. Private sectors by building more schools have make it possible for children

who would not had access to education because of the limited places in public school to now have alternative of going to private schools thereby providing varieties of choices of school for the parents and their wards. Participation of private sector in providing education has led to improvement in the quality of education rendered by the private schools, because they compete among them in order to retain the clients which are the students and their parents.

## **CONCLUSION**

This work investigated the contribution of private sector participation in the provision of secondary education in Ebonyi State. This was indicated by both increased number of private schools and an astronomical increase in enrolment. This was in contrast with public schools whose percentage enrolment has been declining in recent years. From the findings of this work it became very clear that if this trend is allowed to continue, public secondary schools will soon go into extinction in the nearest future. It is true that private sector involvement in the provision of education has the potential to be part of the solution to many education problems, but it is important to understand and respond to its manifestations and impacts, particularly how private sector practices affect the poorest and most marginalized. There is therefore urgent need for government to put policies in place that can revive our public schools at least for the seek of some children whose parents could not afford the exorbitant fees charged by private schools. Otherwise education will only be for the rich and well to do in the society and this has a far reaching negative consequence like increase in crime state, prostitution, wastage of human resources that would have been harnessed for developmental purposes. Leaving the education of our children in the hands of private hands whose primary motive is profit maximization is not best for the country.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this work, it is therefore recommended that;

1. Government should put policies in place that should revive our public schools to avoid its going into extinction. This can be done by providing educational resources for the existing ones, building new one to cater for the teeming population or going into partnership with the private sector.
2. Government should formulate a workable modality in which the government and private sector can go into partnership.
3. The private sector even as they assist in making secondary education accessible to the masses should not put profit first, but should be considerate in their charges so that the poor and less privileged will be able to have also quality education.
4. Government should also increase their monitoring of the activities of private proprietors of schools to make sure the schools are of statutory standard.
5. Government should put a structure in place to regulate the fees charged by private schools and
6. Lastly communities, philanthropists and other charity organization should come to the aid of our public schools by building more public schools and providing educational resources to them.

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